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FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2018

TAGS: PREL KPAL PGOV IS YM

SUBJECT: YEMENIS DEMONSTRATE IN SUPPORT OF PALESTINIANS,
DISPERSE PEACEFULLY

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Post RSO sources indicate that, on January 22, a crowd of between 5000 and 6000 marched from Sana'a University toward the headquarters of the U.N. Development Program (UNDP), in protest of the Israeli blockade of Gaza. Police prevented the group from reaching UNDP headquarters. The crowd, which included people chanting "death to Israel" and "death to America," dispersed peacefully in the early afternoon. In addition to the main protest, a group of 300 women gathered at a reviewing stand on a wide stretch of 70 Meter Road (near the Presidential Palace) and a group of 100 individuals gathered in the Hadda area in the southern part of Sana'a. In all cases the gatherings ended peacefully.

¶2. (C) Ahmed Abd El-Maguid, First Secretary at the Egyptian Embassy, told PolOff on January 22 that his embassy was awaiting a letter that they had been informed demonstrators would deliver on the blockade of Gaza. (Note. Demonstrators had originally applied for permits to march on the Egyptian and U.S. Embassies but were refused. End Note.) He noted that, while he did not know the content of the letter, he expected it to be a call for Egyptian intervention on the issue with the GOI. Assistant Deputy Foreign Minister Khalid al-Akwa was unsurprised at the demonstrations, commenting to PolOff that Yemenis feel strongly about the plight of the Palestinians. He further noted that the coverage of developments in Gaza and demonstrations in the region by the satellite channels probably exacerbated popular Yemeni sentiment. "They are watching the news on satellite," he said. "It makes them want to get out and express their feelings."

Comment

¶3. (C) As is true in the rest of the region, there is a strong current of sympathy for the Palestinians among Yemenis. Demonstrations in protest of what many Yemenis see as victimization of their fellow Arabs are unsurprising. Post is pleased to note that the ROYG was able to contain the demonstrations without resorting to violent tactics. End Comment.

SECHE